

Joint Statement Between the United States of America and the Republic of the Philippines*October 18, 2003*

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo warmly welcomed President George W. Bush to Malacanang today for the first State visit of an American President to Manila in over 30 years. As the two Presidents highlighted during President Macapagal-Arroyo's State visit to the United States last May, the ties between the Philippine and American peoples are deeply rooted in shared history and values, as well as in a shared commitment to global peace, security and prosperity.

President Macapagal-Arroyo expressed her appreciation for the support extended by President Bush to the Veteran Equity bills pending in both houses of the U.S. Congress, designed to enhance benefits for Filipino veterans of World War II residing in the United States. Both Presidents noted that the American and Filipino fighting men of World War II remain a strong bond between the peoples of both nations. President Bush announced the doubling of U.S. funding for medical equipment at the Veterans Medical Center in Quezon City. President Bush highlighted his respect for the impressive contributions of Filipino-Americans to American social, cultural and economic life.

The two Presidents focused their discussion on the security challenges facing the United States and the Philippines, agreeing that the U.S.-Philippine partnership has taken on new vitality and importance in the context of the global war on terrorism. Presidents Macapagal-Arroyo and Bush reviewed recent successes in the war on terrorism, noting with satisfaction that a number of terrorist killers have been brought to justice. They agreed that while progress had been made in attacking terrorist organizations both globally and regionally, much work remains to be done.

President Bush praised President Macapagal-Arroyo's courage and strength in confronting terrorism in the Philippines and in Southeast Asia. He expressed particular appreciation for Philippine initiatives to improve and expand international counterterrorism cooperation and thanked

President Macapagal-Arroyo for her leadership working with key ASEAN partners to address the terrorist threat on a regional basis. The two leaders agreed that such cooperation, particularly in the area of information sharing, is an essential component of the war on terrorism.

In recognition of the strength and vitality of the alliance, as well as its vital role in promoting regional security and combating global terrorism, President Bush informed President Macapagal-Arroyo that he had designated the Philippines as a Major Non-NATO Ally (MNNA). President Macapagal-Arroyo thanked President Bush for this honor and expressed hope that this move would facilitate the modernization of the Philippine Armed Forces and the strengthening of our defense partnership.

In keeping with their May 19 pledge to conduct a comprehensive security assessment, the two Presidents also reviewed and endorsed the findings of the 2003 Joint Defense Assessment (JDA) of the Armed Forces of the Philippines' capabilities and requirements. The purpose of the JDA is to assist the government of the Philippines in developing a defense program that will improve the ability of the Philippine military to respond to threats to Philippine security.

President Arroyo noted the determination of her government to move forward on an ambitious program of military reform, including increased allocation of resources to Philippine national defense. President Bush committed to assist the Philippines in this effort.

The two Presidents agreed that their respective defense establishments would embark on a multi-year plan to implement the key recommendations of the Joint Defense Assessment. They agreed to direct their defense establishments to finalize details of the plan and begin its implementation.

President Macapagal-Arroyo welcomed substantial new U.S. programs of law enforcement training, equipment, and expertise in support of her efforts to strengthen the rule of law and to reform and strengthen the Philippines National Police and other law enforcement agencies.

President Bush commended President Macapagal-Arroyo for her steadfast leadership in pursuing economic reforms in the Philippines and welcomed her pledge to maintain resolve in pursuing reforms in revenue collection, energy privatization and intellectual property rights protection.

President Bush praised President Macapagal-Arroyo's determination to alleviate poverty and other socio-economic grievances that are too often exploited by terrorist organizations to recruit followers. President Arroyo welcomed the new, six year U.S. initiative to strengthen education in the poorest areas of the Philippines, particularly Mindanao, as supportive of her efforts. This new program complements the Philippine government's efforts to uplift the communities in the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) and expand their access to education and training.

The two Presidents discussed the Philippine government's efforts to establish a durable, effective peace with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF). They expressed appreciation for Malaysia's role in facilitating the negotiating process. President Bush emphasized U.S. willingness to provide diplomatic and financial assistance in support of peace but emphasized that the MILF must first fully renounce terror and demonstrate its commitment to peaceful political negotiations.

Presidents Bush and Macapagal-Arroyo discussed the situation in Iraq. The two leaders reiterated their shared commitment to a free Iraq at peace with its neighbors and expressed unwavering determination to continue the important work of helping the Iraqi people build a stable, just and prosperous country that poses no threat to the world. President Bush thanked President Macapagal-Arroyo for the contributions made by the Philippines to security and reconstruction in Iraq. The two Presidents affirmed the vital role of the United Nations in postwar Iraq and stressed the need for more countries to contribute peacekeeping and humanitarian contingents to Iraq as that country prepares for sovereignty under a democratic regime.

The two leaders welcomed the six party talks in Beijing and reiterated their intention

to work with other members of the Asia Pacific region to ensure the complete, verifiable and irreversible elimination of North Korea's nuclear weapons program.

President Bush congratulated the Philippines on its nomination by Asian countries to join the United Nations Security Council and expressed confidence that the Philippines would contribute to global peace and security.

President Bush and President Macapagal-Arroyo concluded the visit by celebrating the impressive gains made in Philippine-U.S. relations under their administrations, expressing confidence that today's State visit marks another concrete step forward in the development of a modern, mature relationship between friends and equals.

NOTE: An original was not available for verification of the content of this joint statement.

Remarks at a State Dinner Hosted by President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo in Manila

October 18, 2003

The President. Thank you very much, Madam President and Attorney Arroyo, for your gracious hospitality. Laura and I are really grateful for your warm words of welcome. We also appreciate the distinction you have bestowed upon us this evening, the Order of the Sikatuna and the Order of Gabriela Silang. We are honored to accept them on behalf of the American people.

I represent the oldest democracy in the Americas. And I'm proud to pay tribute to the oldest democracy in Asia. The friendship between our countries is strong and warm and enduring, and we reaffirm that partnership here tonight.

Today I was the first United States President since Dwight Eisenhower to address a Joint Session of your Congress. In 1960, President Eisenhower expressed America's firm support for a fledgling democracy. Two generations later, I am pleased to show my country's support for the great democracy you have become.

The Philippines and the United States are linked by shared values, by shared history, and by a shared commitment to the defense